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VISIT TO USSR OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, announced today that he would be visiting the USSR from March 30 to April 7. His visit will include Soviet regions and cities where Canadian interests -- commercial, cultural, and humanitarian -- are engaged, including Siberia and the Ukraine.

The centrepiece of the visit will be his talks with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Mr. Clark expressed his pleasure at the warm message of welcome received from Mr. Gromyko late last week. He stressed the importance that he attached to the visit for the contribution it could make the East/West affairs as well as for bilateral relations.

"This is the first visit to the Soviet Union by a Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs since 1973" he said. "The agenda will be wide-ranging. This means that there will inevitably be some discussion of the approaches that Canada and the Soviet Union -- each of which has new leaders -- will be taking on important questions".

Mr. Clark is leading a Governmental delegation which includes seven Members of Parliament. These members, according to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, would be "assigned tasks after the visit within their specific areas of expertise and interest". Mr. Clark added that his selection of private members reflected their experience and responsibilities and took into account the program which the Soviet Government had arranged for the delegation. The involvement of the Members of Parliament in the visit forms a part of Mr. Clark's attempt to give an impetus to Canadian/Soviet relations in every possible area.